

FINAL REPORT

**Marine Endangered Species Monitoring Program
Solicitation Number: DACW61-01-T-0044
Contract Number: DACW61-01-P-0176
US Army Corps of Engineers
Philadelphia District**

**Mississippi River Gulf Outlet
New Orleans Louisiana**

Dates:

18 April through 29 May 2001

Submitted by:

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ABSTRACT

A twenty-four-hour-a-day marine endangered species monitoring program was conducted onboard the hopper dredge "McFarland" during the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet dredging project near New Orleans, Louisiana from 18 April through 29 May 2001. Endangered and threatened sea turtles were the species targeted. A total of thirteen separate incidents were recorded in which all/or parts of these species were found.

INTRODUCTION

The observer program to monitor the impact of dredging on endangered species in the area of dredge operations was conducted in response to US Army Corps of Engineers (COE) contract to perform maintenance dredging of the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet near New Orleans, Louisiana. Pursuant to agreements with the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), certified observers were required onboard throughout the project to document any detected incidents involving target species.

SCOPE OF WORK

REMSA, Inc. was subcontracted by the Philadelphia district of the US Army Corps of Engineers to conduct endangered species monitoring for the project. *REMSA* was to provide the necessary trained personnel and equipment to clean and monitor inflow and overflow screens onboard the hopper dredge *McFarland* and to provide the necessary reports. Monitoring was to be performed 24 hours each day from 18 April through 5 June 2001. Observers were to inspect and clean all inflow and overflow screens, and to inspect both dragheads each time they were brought on deck for cleaning and maintenance. Any death or injury involving target species required the evidence to be identified, logged, measured, and photographed. Disposal of any organism recovered was to be the responsibility of the observer and dredge personnel. Target species included the loggerhead turtle (*Caretta caretta*), green turtle (*Chelonia mydas*), Kemp's ridley turtle (*Lepidochelys kempii*), leatherback turtle (*Dermochelys coriacea*), and hawksbill turtles (*Eretmochelys imbricata*). A load sheet was to be completed for each load whether or not turtle parts were found. In the case of an incident involving a sea turtle, an incident report was to be completed. These forms were to be provided by the dredging contractor. Examples of the blank forms are in the Appendix. Load sheets were turned in to the Corps Inspector weekly, and a final report was to be submitted upon completion of the project. A daylight

bridge watch was to be conducted during periods when the observer was not occupied with screen cleaning duties. Observers were to be certain that dredge crew personnel were aware of the need to avoid incidents involving any endangered animal, and that civil and criminal penalties are possible for harming or harassing endangered species.

METHODS

Maintenance dredging by the hopper dredge McFarland near New Orleans, Louisiana began when the observers arrived onboard on 18 April 2001 and continued through 29 May 2001 (Loads: 001-408). The coordinates for the area were in the vicinity of Lat- 29°28.325 N and Lon- 89°04.931 W. Two trained observers were present onboard the dredge during all dredging operations working 12 hours each day covering 24 hours each day. Names and addresses of observers are furnished in the Appendix.

The McFarland operated with 100% screening of all inflow. The dragheads were equipped with turtle deflectors and restricting bars on the under side (see picture below).



The inflow passed through two screening traps over the hopper with screening grates measuring 4" x 4".

Excessive material was discharged overboard after passing through the screens and into the hopper.

Water temperatures were taken daily throughout the job. Mid-depth temperatures ranged from a low of 74°F to a high of 81°F. Results are found in the daily load sheets.

A bridge lookout was maintained during those daylight hours that the observer was not on deck checking screens and was on duty. Watch was kept for turtles in the dredging area and dump site.

Turtle observation sheets, or load sheets, were filled out for each load that was completed. Observers routinely noted the numbers and types of other species being deposited on the screens. Daily reports were also completed with load information for that day.

RESULTS

There were a total of 11 turtle takes and 2 other incidents where viscera was found as a result from a previous take.

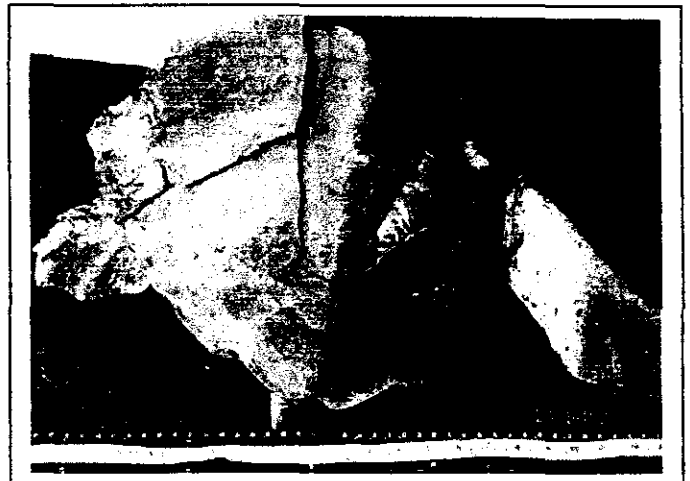
Load- 059

Date- 24 April 2001

Time- 0850

Water Temp- 74°F

Species- *Lepidochelys kempi*



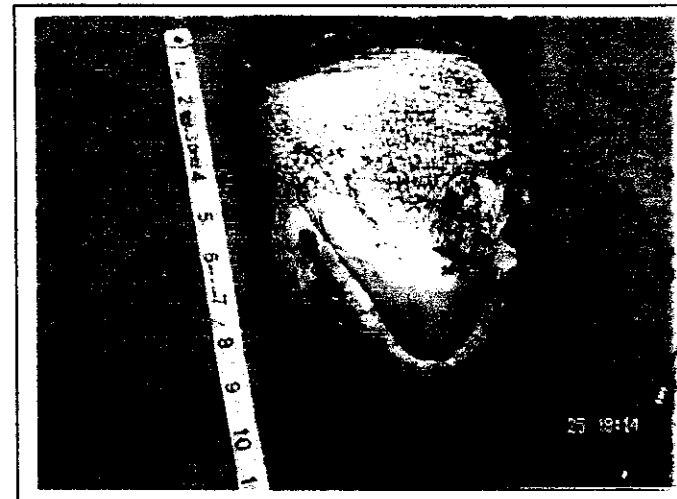
Load- 064

Date- 25 April 2001

Time- 1210

Water Temp- 80°F

Species- *Lepidochelys kempi*



Load- 083

Date- 27 April 2001

Time- 1900

Water Temp- 78°F

Species- *Caretta caretta*



Load- 102

Date- 29 April 2001

Time- 2100

Water Temp- 74°F

Species- *Caretta caretta*



Load- 120

Date- 02 May 2001

Time- 0815

Water Temp- 75.5°F

Species- *Caretta Caretta*



Load- 144

Date- 04 May 2001

Time- 2045

Water Temp- 77°F

Species- *Caretta caretta*



Load- 347

Date- 25 May 2001

Time- 0610

Water Temp- 76°F

Species- *Caretta caretta*



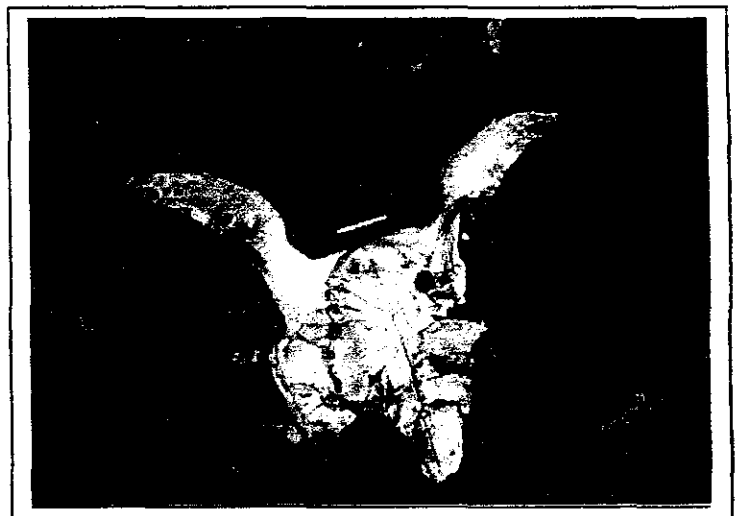
Load- 354

Date- 25 May 2001

Time- 1948

Water Temp- 75°F

Species- *Caretta caretta*



Load- 357

Date- 26 May 2001

Time- 0051

Water Temp- 77°F

Species- *Caretta caretta*



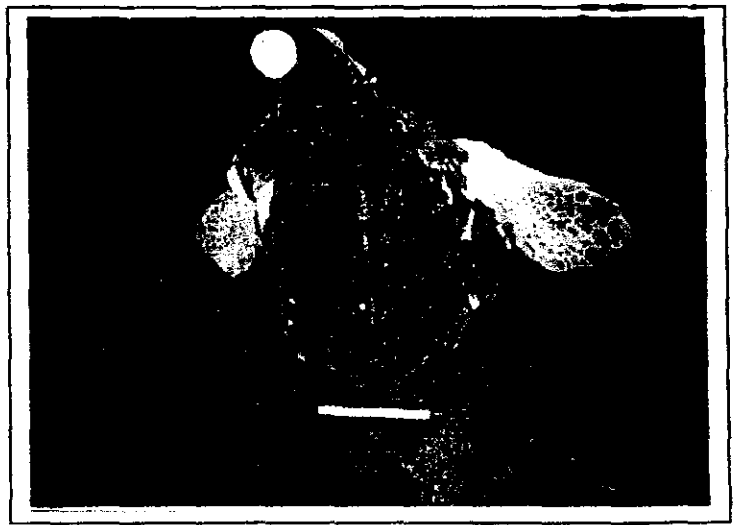
Load- 386

Date- 28 May 2001

Time- 0646

Water Temp- 81°F

Species- *Caretta caretta*



Load- 399

Date- 29 May 2001

Time- 0520

Water Temp- 77°F

Species- *Caretta caretta*



Discussion

This particular dredging project in Louisiana caused an abnormal number of turtle takes. This was seen to be out of the ordinary for this area because turtle takes had not been as abundant in this area in the past.

There could be various reasons for the number of takes. It is possible that the tropical storm system that moved through the area could have pushed a number of turtles into that area that would have not been there under normal circumstances. Thus, making them very vulnerable to the dredging project.

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APPENDIX

LIST OF OBSERVERS

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